

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

ACDA-07 /077 W

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R 260950Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 459

INFO ACCONSUL CALCUTTA 3555

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJECT: INDO-BANGLADESH BORDER INCIDENTS

REF: A. NEW DELHI 5893; B. DACCA 2031; C. DACCA 2067

1. WE SHARE AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI'S SENSE OF UNCERTAINTY SURROUNDING THE RECENT EVENTS ON THE INDO-BANGLADESH BORDER (REF A). FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, THE MOST IMMEDIATELY SALIENT POINT IS NOT THE FACT OF THE CLASHES -- THEY HAVE GONE ON INTERMITTENTLY FOR MONTHS, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD REPEATEDLY -- BUT RATHER THE PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THESE NEW CLASHES AND THE PUBLICITY GIVEN TO THE EXCHANGE OF STRONGLY WORDED PROTEST NOTES.

2. LOOKING SOLELY AT THE EVENTS ARISING OUT OF THE INCIDENTS, WE TEND TO SEE THE BANGLADESHI PROTEST NOTE AND PRESS STATEMENT ABOUT THE APRIL 20 INCIDENT AS REACTIVE, CONCLUDING THAT THE BDG FELT IT HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RESPOND TO THE INDIAN PROTEST ABOUT THE APRIL 19 INCIDENT WITH ITS OWN SET OF CHARGES. (IT IS CONFIDENTIAL

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PERHAPS NOTEWORTHY THAT SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF ITS

PRESS NOTE ON APRIL 21, THE BDG HAS ONCE MORE LAPSED  
INTO SILENCE.)

3. WE HAVE TRIED TO CONSIDER THE BRIEF, IF SHARP EXCHANGE OF CHARGES AND COUNTER-CHARGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TOTALITY OF INDO-BANGLADESHI RELATIONS. GIVEN WHAT WE READ AS PROGRESS ON THE FARAKKA BARRAGE ISSUE (REF B), THE OUTBURST REGARDING THE BORDER HAS A VERY JARRING QUALITY. BECAUSE OF ITS DECISION TO ACCEPT THE VISIT OF THE INDIAN TECHNICAL TEAM BEFORE THAT OF A GOODWILL MISSION TO DISCUSS THE WHOLE RANGE OF ISSUES IN INDO-BANGLADESHI RELATIONS, WE WONDER IF THE BDG FELT IT NECESSARY TO RIPOSTE AS VIGOROUSLY AS IT DID ON THE BORDER ISSUE IN ORDER TO AVOID ADDING TO ANY DOMESTIC REPERCUSSION TO ITS CONCESSIONS ON FARAKKA.

4. FROM HERE WE CANNOT SPECULATE ON WHY THE INDIANS CHOSE TO MAKE THE INITIAL PROTEST. THE MFA IN DACCA, NOT UNNATURALLY, HAS ADDUCED THAT GHE GOI PROTESTED IN ORDER TO BREAK OFF WORK ON THE JOINT ENQUIRY TEAM REPORT WHICH THE BANGLADESHIS CLAIM PUTS INDIA IN A BAD LIGHT (SEE REF B). ACCORDING TO A DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUE, GENERAL DASTGIR, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE BDR, IS HIGHLY EXERCISED ABOUT THE INDIAN FAILURE TO SIGN THE REPORT AND SUCH IRRITATION MAY HELP EXPLAIN BDG'S READINESS TO LEVEL A PUBLIC ATTACK AT THE INDIANS. ON THE INCIDENT ITSELF, DASTGIR NOTED THAT IT HAD BEEN A MORE SERIOUS CLASH THAN USUAL, ALTHOUGH NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE TO HAVE OCCURRED SINCE NOVEMBER.

5. DASTGIR'S SENTIMENTS WERE MIRRORED BY BRIGADIER M. A. MANZUR, CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF, IN A CHANCE CONVERSATION WE HELD WITH HIM TODAY. STRESSING THAT BORDER INCIDENTS HAD BECOME A COMMONPLACE BUT ADDING THAT THE BDG HAD DELIBERATELY DOWNPLAYED THEM SINCE POPULAR FEELING IN BANGLADESH HAS BEEN RUNNING SO HIGH OVER THE FARAKKA ISSUE, MANZUR SAID THAT THE APRIL 21 INCIDENT WAS OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE AND HAD TO BE PROTESTED. THE COGS SAID THAT THE SIGNIFICANCE LAY IN THE FACT THAT

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SHELLS WERE FIRED AT BANGLADESH RIFLES (BDR) POSITIONS -- A FACT WHICH DEMONSTRATED THAT THE INDIAN BORDER SECURITY FORCE (BSF), AND NOT "MISCREANTS", HAD TO HAVE HAD A HAND IN THE INCIDENT -- AND THAT BSF CHIEF ASWINI KUMAR WAS IN THE VICINITY -- A FACT WHICH WOULD MAKE THE BSF'S ACTION EVEN MOREMPORTENTOUS. MANZUR SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THE INDIAN NOTE DESCRIBING AN APRIL 19 INCIDENT WAS SIMPLY "PRE-EMPTIVE". MANZUR SAID THAT THE

BORDER IS NOW "RELATIVELY QUIET".

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## Message Attributes

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